

**Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Sanctuary Advisory Council
National Annual Report
2007**



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**U.S. Department of Commerce
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Office of National Marine Sanctuaries**

About This Document

This annual report provides information about the activities of National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Councils in 2007. Please note that the council accomplishments that are included in this report are highlights of the many accomplishments and contributions made by the councils. For additional site-specific information, please contact the sanctuary advisory council coordinators listed in the back of this document.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Council Profiles and Annual Reports	
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	5
Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	5
Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	6
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	6
Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	7
Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	8
Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	9
Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	10
Monitor National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	10
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	11
Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument) Advisory Council.....	11
Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	12
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	13
Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.....	14
Directory of Staff Supporting Advisory Councils.....	15

Introduction

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The system includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea (Northwestern Hawaiian Islands) Marine National Monument. The sanctuary system is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which manages sanctuaries by working cooperatively with the public to protect sanctuaries while allowing recreation and commercial activities that are compatible with resource protection. The sanctuary staff works to enhance public awareness of our marine resources and maritime heritage through scientific research, monitoring, exploration, educational programs and outreach.

The sites in the sanctuary system embrace part of our collective riches as a nation. Within their protected waters, giant humpback whales breed and calve their young, coral colonies flourish, and shipwrecks tell stories of our maritime history. Habitats include beautiful rocky reefs, lush kelp forests, whale migration corridors, spectacular deep-sea canyons and underwater archaeological sites. Our nation's sanctuaries and marine national monument can provide a safe habitat for species close to extinction or protect historically significant shipwrecks. Ranging in size from less than one square mile to more than 5,300 square miles, each site is a unique place needing special protections. Natural classrooms, cherished recreational spots, and valuable commercial industries—marine sanctuaries represent many things to many people.

Sanctuary Advisory Councils

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has worked with councils for sixteen years. Every site in the system has an advisory council. Over 450 people (members and alternates) serve on advisory councils. Like the sanctuaries themselves, the councils are constantly evolving and maturing. At some sites, councils are tackling new, different, and sometimes more complex issues. At other sites, councils continue to address familiar issues in a dedicated and steadfast fashion.

Councils bring together members of a diverse community to provide advice and recommendations to the sanctuary superintendents on the management and protection of sanctuaries, or to assist the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in guiding a proposed site through the designation process.

The members of the councils serve as a broad cross-section of the communities that lie adjacent to national marine sanctuaries. Council members represent such interests as conservation, education, research, fishing, whale watching, diving and other recreational activities, boating and shipping, tourism, harbors and ports, maritime business, agriculture, and maritime heritage, as well as jurisdictional partners from local, regional, state, tribal and federal agencies.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries regards the involvement of communities and the development of a stewardship ethic as vitally important to successfully protect sanctuary resources. Councils create a nexus among the communities, the resources and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is committed to the full support, utilization, and enhancement of councils at all sanctuaries and provides national support to that end. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries deeply appreciates the dedication, hard work and passion of each and every one of our sanctuary advisory council members.

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 1998 to enhance opportunities for public involvement in sanctuary management and to support the process of management plan revision. The council has 21 voting members, 10 representing various local, state and federal government partners, and 11 representing a variety of community interests (conservation, education, research, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, tourism, non-consumptive recreation, business, Chumash community and the public-at-large). The council meets bi-monthly and has formed a number of active working groups, including those focused on conservation, commercial fishing, recreational fishing, education, research, and Chumash community involvement.

2007 Annual Report

In July, the council voted unanimously to endorse a comprehensive report and set of management recommendations contained within its conservation working group's final draft report: *Open Ocean Aquaculture in the Santa Barbara Channel: An emerging challenge for the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary*. The 80-page report, developed by members of the conservation working group over two years, compiles information on the potential environmental implications and regulatory framework for open ocean finfish aquaculture with the intent of providing sanctuary management and stakeholders a tool for evaluating future aquaculture project proposals in the Santa Barbara Channel. The report proposes 10 precautionary recommendations related to environmental standards for open ocean aquaculture and sanctuary involvement in policy development and rulemaking processes.

The council sent a letter to the sanctuary superintendent suggesting a course of action for improving public awareness of marine reserve and conservation area boundaries within the sanctuary, specifically with regard to points of intersection with island shorelines. The council's letter advised the sanctuary to collaborate with agency partners to conduct "further survey research, both with high-precision GPS units and photo documentation, to accurately determine where the currently defined California Department of Fish and Game State Marine Protected Area boundaries intersect the island shorelines." The council also recommended that "once survey results have been post processed, an investigation should be performed to ascertain if it is possible to slightly refine (to the hundredth minute) the zone geographic coordinates to coincide with natural landmarks at each location." Since receiving the advice, the California Department of Fish and Game made technical revisions to several of the boundary coordinates that were noted by the council as problematic.

The council approved a letter to the California Fish and Game Commission regarding the final state regulatory step needed to close "gap" areas between the state and federal Channel Islands marine reserve and conservation areas. The letter mentioned the council's history with the marine reserves process; expressed support for closing of the marine reserve gap areas; and expressed council support for completion of an agreement between California Department of Fish and Game and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary regarding management and implementation of the marine protected area network. Subsequently the state of California completed the final regulatory step on December 17, thus finalizing the entire network of marine reserves and conservation areas totaling 240 square nautical miles of protected zones and representing 22 percent of the sanctuary.

Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 2002 to support the Joint Management Plan Review process currently underway for the sanctuary and its neighboring sanctuaries, Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries. The council has members representing research, conservation, maritime activity, education and the community-at-large.

The government seats on the council are held by representatives from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Coast Guard. The council holds a minimum of four regular meetings per year, and an annual retreat in the summer.

2007 Annual Report

In March the council hosted a public panel discussion of experts supporting Marin and Sonoma County heritage fishing communities, and low-impact fishing methods within the marine sanctuaries.

In September the council hosted a public panel discussion on the California Marine Life Protection Act and the California Marine Protected Areas (MPA) System. The panel included staff from the California State Marine Life Protection Act office, members of the MPA science and technology working group, as well as stakeholder group members for the MPA process.

Council members were active participants in the monitoring and cleanup efforts during the *Cosco Busan* San Francisco Bay oil spill in November 2007.

The council passed a resolution requesting consideration of including the submarine geographic feature Bodega Canyon within the proposed boundary expansion of the sanctuary. This proposed boundary expansion will be introduced by Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey as the House of Representatives bill 1187 – Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries Boundary Modification and Protection Act.

Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in May 2005. Voting members include research, education, fishing/Western Pacific Fisheries Council, ocean recreation, and community-at-large. American Samoa's Department of Commerce Environment Division, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, American Samoa Community College Sea Grant Program, the National Park Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service are nonvoting seats. The council meets monthly.

2007 Annual Report

The council met in August to discuss the creation, kick off and celebration of the new Fagatele Bay trail. In addition, the council helped the site prepare for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting which was held in Pago Pago in August.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

Established in 1991, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is the oldest of the councils and has 20 members covering a wide spectrum of interests in the Florida Keys community, including boating, conservation and environment, diving, education and outreach, South Florida ecosystem restoration, fishing (commercial and recreational), elected county government, submerged cultural resources, research and monitoring, tourism and the community at large. Representatives (nonvoting) from the State of Florida (Department of Environmental Protection and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission), South Florida Water Management District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Navy also attend meetings regularly and provide updates. The council meets six times a year and currently has four active working groups: ballyhoo, water quality, ecosystem restoration and education and outreach. Ad hoc committees are formed periodically to deal with more narrowly focused issues.

2007 Annual Report

Each of the six regular council meetings in 2007 had full agendas, with reports and discussion of the myriad, complex resource management issues affecting the sanctuary. Discussions of the process to revise the sanctuary management plan, including revision status and implementation, took place throughout the year. Other major topics of discussion, action, and resolution included research, monitoring and restoration; proposed developments that might affect the sanctuary; and the status of sanctuary and other government agencies' management plans and regulations.

Research, monitoring and restoration topics reviewed by the council included the unusual persistence of harmful algae blooms; benthic habitat mapping status and initiatives; planning for impacts of climate change in marine protected areas; water quality and water flow in the sanctuary, the Everglades, Florida Bay and other adjacent waters; and ongoing restoration efforts involving coral and sea urchin aquaculture.

Several proposed developments were of concern to the council, particularly the potential impacts of testing hydrokinetic energy technology within the sanctuary and future installation of energy-generating equipment, and potential air, water and climate impacts of a proposed coal-fired power plant in Everglades City. In May, the council held a special workshop to examine climate change and energy issues to more fully investigate some of the concerns identified during review of this proposed coal fired power plant. The council took action in passing resolutions to support reducing the causes of climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants related to energy production, and objecting to the construction of coal-fired power plants in the Everglades Basin. Florida Governor Charlie Crist and the Florida Public Service Commission took the input of all interested parties into account, and opined against the new construction of this coal-powered plant.

Sanctuary and partner agencies' management plans and regulatory activities also held the attention of council members throughout the year. Sanctuary law enforcement officers and county officials kept the council abreast of the unique issues, approaches and needs in the Florida Keys, including those related to removal of marine debris and derelict vessels, sport and commercial fishing, and funding. NOAA and state officials provided regular updates on key fishery stocks, offshore aquaculture activities and plans, marine mammal protection, and proposed regulations. The Monroe County Marine Resources Department was restructured, and the council expressed support of their efforts to protect nearshore resources. Finally, the council kept abreast of regional Office of National Marine Sanctuaries efforts to work with stakeholders on an "Islands in the Stream" concept being explored by the executive office, which includes potential establishment of a series of ecologically connected marine protected areas.

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 2005 to enhance opportunities for public involvement in sanctuary management and to support the process of the management plan review. The council has eight voting (non-governmental) members representing various community interests including recreational diving, diving operations, oil and gas industry, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, research, education and conservation. Additionally, non-voting representatives from three governmental agencies serve on the council, including: Minerals Management Service, Department of the Interior; United States Coast Guard; and NOAA Fisheries, Department of Commerce. The council meets quarterly or more frequently as needed during the management plan review process.

2007 Annual Report

The council worked tirelessly throughout 2007 on the ongoing review and revision of the sanctuary's management plan. Council members reorganized previously formed subcommittees into subcommittees

based on management plan priority issue areas, including: harvesting impacts from fishing, impacts from visitor use, protection of additional habitat in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico, enforcement, education and outreach, and pollutant discharge.

In April, the council passed a resolution regarding further protection for Bright Bank in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. The council recommended protection from further destruction to coral habitat from treasure hunting and other activities on Bright Bank, an area already designated as a Habitat Area of Particular Concern.

The council formed a boundary expansion working group to evaluate other habitats and topographic features within the northwestern Gulf of Mexico for inclusion in the sanctuary. The council recommended that sanctuary management consider expanding the sanctuary to include the Stetson Bank Ring, habitats between and adjacent to East and West Flower Garden Banks, and several other banks in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

The subcommittee on fishing impacts developed a set of six proposed strategies for increasing protection for geological, fish and other natural resources of the Flower Garden Banks impacted by fishing activities. The council recommended that sanctuary staff move forward with designing an experiment to determine the impacts of fishing and diving on the sanctuary that would include no-fishing and no-diving zones.

The subcommittee on law enforcement developed a set of nine strategies to enhance enforcement of sanctuary regulations. Additionally, the enforcement subcommittee presented to the council their suggestions for a Flower Garden Banks Summary Settlement Schedule. The enforcement and visitor use subcommittees, as well as the full council, provided advice and feedback on the development of a voluntary violation reporting form to be used by visitors to the sanctuary. The sanctuary plans to make this form available on the Web site.

The subcommittee on visitor use developed a set of strategies that addressed the need for a vessel registration system, monitoring and research to determine users and impacts, the need for partitioned use of mooring buoys, and user conflict.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 1999 to support the site's management plan review, which began the same year. The council's focus shifted in 2007 to implementation of the newly approved management plan. The council includes 14 members representing conservation, education, research, recreational fishing and diving, commercial/charter fishing, and federal and state agency partners. The council meets quarterly.

2007 Annual Report

After several years focused on completing the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary's revised management plan and accompanying new regulations, the council shifted to implementation of the plan. In 2007, the council worked closely with staff to more formally explore the concept of a designated research area in the sanctuary. The council's research area working group reconvened in October to develop boundary options and other significant recommendations. In December, working group members developed a proposed monitoring plan for the research area. The full public process on the research area concept is expected to take place throughout 2008 and into 2009.

Following a law enforcement summit in April 2007, the council established a new working group of state and federal law enforcement partners responsible for reporting on enforcement activities at each quarterly meeting. Monitoring compliance of new and existing regulations is a key component in protecting the sanctuary's marine resources.

Another key achievement of the council was completion of the site's condition report. Sanctuary condition reports provide a summary of resources in the sanctuary, pressures on those resources, the current condition and trends, and management responses to the pressures that threaten the integrity of the marine environment. That report is expected to be distributed in 2008.

Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 2001 to support the joint management plan review process now underway for the Farallones sanctuary and its neighboring sanctuaries, Cordell Bank and Monterey Bay. Council members represent the areas of education, research, conservation, maritime activities and the community-at-large, as well as the sanctuary's primary government partner, the National Park Service. The council meets quarterly, including an annual meeting with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, to discuss issues related to the northern management area and overlapping issues. Several council members participate in ad hoc working groups.

2007 Annual Report

In February, the Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay sanctuary advisory councils held a joint meeting. At this meeting, they passed a joint resolution to request that NOAA Law Enforcement be present in adequate numbers on site to coordinate with the U.S. Coast Guard and other law enforcement so that Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary staff could effectively protect sanctuary resources during the 2007 Maverick's Surf Contest.

In April, the council passed a resolution in support of H.R. 1187, a bill proposed by Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) to expand the boundaries of Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries.

In July, the council passed a resolution in support of the final adoption of the stronger draft regulations affecting regulation of introduced species promulgated by the draft Joint Management Plan Review in October 2006. Council members requested this resolution be sent to the California Coastal Commission prior to the August 2007 hearing that took place on this matter. They also authorized a letter to be sent to National Marine Sanctuary Program Director Daniel Basta expressing concern about the sanctuary's current funding level. The council requested clarification on the allocation of funds within the National Marine Sanctuary Program in this letter. The council also authorized a final draft letter to Daniel Basta requesting a line item addition to base in the sanctuary's budget to fund a full-time advisory council coordinator.

In December, the council passed a resolution in support of a modification of the boundaries proposed in H.R. 1187 to include all of Bodega Canyon by adding a 296.5-square-nautical-mile area. The council also wrote a response letter to Daniel Basta concerning their involvement with the Blue Seas, Green Communities Initiative. To participate in the Initiative, the council authorized establishment of a "greening" working group. The first task of this group will be to aid in the planning and execution of the 2008 Ocean Climate Summit, which is being organized by the sanctuary. The group will then continue to aid in implementing strategies from the action plan that will be produced as a result of the summit. The working group will also actively be involved with the greening of the sanctuary's campus as outlined in the sanctuary's Facilities Master Plan.

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

Formed in 1992, the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is one of the older councils and also the largest at 31 members. Representatives cover all facets of the sanctuary community, including conservation, education, research, fishing, whale watching, tourism, recreation, shipping, business/commerce, Native Hawaiians, individual islands, the community-at-large, and a number of state and federal partners. The council formed subcommittees for education, research, and conservation that meet on a frequent basis; the entire council generally meets quarterly.

2007 Annual Report

The council has been working on issues that may affect humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaii. These issues include vessel-whale collisions, entanglement, aquaculture development, and water quality. The Superferry and other vessel-whale interactions continue to be discussed, and focus groups have met to address management, research and education strategies for these potential threats.

In addition to its regular meetings, the council held an annual retreat and planning session on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, the site of the new NOAA Regional Facility. Presentations were made to the council on vessel-whale collisions and entanglement and how the sanctuary is addressing emerging issues that affect humpback whales and their habitat. The council also held ten subcommittee meetings and accepted the "Research Needs for Offshore Aquaculture Development in Hawaii, identified by the council's Research Committee and Aquaculture Working Group".

The council devoted a significant amount of time in preparing for the management plan review process, which included evaluating sanctuary research, education, conservation, and management programs and assistance in editing the sanctuary's Accomplishments Report 2002-2007. The council was extensively involved in providing feedback to co-managers on the sanctuary's "Assessment of Additional Marine Resources for Possible Inclusion in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary" and attended presentations by experts on Hawaiian monk seals and maritime heritage resources. The council also went through communications training for management plan review. The council voted to support the sanctuary's decision to postpone the request to reauthorize the sanctuary until the completion of the management plan review process. The council sent a letter to the governor of the State of Hawaii in support of expanding sanctuary programs and moving forward with the management plan review process. The council also sent a letter to the director of the National Marine Sanctuary Program in support of the sanctuary's accomplishments and to request funding support.

Another key action by the council included an amendment to the council charter, completed in September 2007. The revisions included a change in the voting status from voting to non-voting for the following five State of Hawaii seats: Office of Planning, Department of Health, Department of Land and Natural Resources, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, and Department of Transportation. A change was also made from voting to non-voting for two federal seats: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard. A two-year extension was made to the charter's date of effect, extending it to October 16, 2009.

***Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council**

Profile

The *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 2005. The council consists of 12 members and four alternates representing the U.S. Navy, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, National Park Service, The Mariners' Museum, recreational diving, heritage tourism, conservation, education, maritime museums and the public-at-large.

The council meets biannually and meeting locations alternate between Virginia and North Carolina.

2007 Annual Report

In 2007, the council held meetings in Hatteras, North Carolina, and Newport News, Virginia. Council members worked this year to determine the best methods for communicating *Monitor* information to their respective constituent groups. In April, the council brainstormed ways to support the sanctuary. Members were encouraged to meet with their respective constituent groups and participate in outreach efforts on behalf of the sanctuary. They specifically worked to better define their role in education, constituent group-building and communication efforts underway at the sanctuary.

In anticipation of management plan review, the council worked to determine priority issue areas at the November meeting. The top five priority issues include: maritime heritage; interpretation, education and outreach; sanctuary boundary expansion; conservation of *Monitor* artifacts; and environmental research. The council plans to further define these issues in 2008. In addition, the council voted to begin meeting three times per year, budget dependent, in 2008.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is one of the oldest councils, established in 1994. It is also one of the largest, with 20 voting members. The seats include such diverse interests as conservation, education, research, commercial and recreational fishing, diving, tourism, recreation, harbors/ports, business/industry, agriculture, and the community-at-large. Seven members represent local or state agency partners. Non-voting federal agency representatives include the U.S. Coast Guard, Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the four California sanctuaries. The advisory council meets bimonthly throughout the sanctuary's coastal area. There are four standing working groups of the advisory council: conservation, education, research, and business-tourism.

2007 Annual Report

At a joint meeting with the Gulf of the Farallones Advisory Council presentations were made by Richard Charter (Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary) and Deborah Streeter (Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary) who had met with NOAA Fisheries staff concerning efforts to improve relationships between the sanctuary advisory councils and fishery management councils. Both councils share concern for ecosystem-based management of marine resources. The councils affirmed these efforts and expressed a need for clarification as to whether this effort was between fishery management councils and the Office of National marine Sanctuaries as a whole, or with sanctuary advisory councils.

Advisory council members expressed great concern after the San Francisco Bay *Cosco Busan* oil spill, and asked how prepared the sanctuary is for prevention, response and cleanup of a spill in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Advisory council Coast Guard member Capt. David Swatland briefed the council about the San Francisco spill, and the advisory council scheduled a joint meeting in 2008 with the Gulf of the Farallones Advisory Council for a longer conversation on this shared concern.

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council

Profile

The Advisory Council was established in 2001 to provide advice on the operation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, now Marine National Monument, and the sanctuary designation process. Twenty-five members represent a broad spectrum of interest groups, including conservation, education, research, recreational and commercial fishing, tourism, Native Hawaiians, and the community-at-large, as well as ten state and federal agency partners. The council generally meets quarterly.

2007 Annual Report

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands were declared a Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve in 2000, and a year later the reserve advisory council was created. In 2006, the area was established as the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. In 2007, the reserve advisory council met once to discuss its role now that the reserve has become a marine national monument. As the council is only able to provide advice to the reserve manager, and not the monument co-trustees, the council has been less active since designation of the monument. During the 2007 meeting, the council agreed to meet during the comment period for the draft management plan, which should be released in mid-2008. The council also expressed support to the reserve manager concerning the importance of having a mechanism for public input for the monument.

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 1995 and has 21 members, including 15 voting members representing conservation, education, research, fishing, tourism, harbors/ports, the community-at-large, local governments, and the four Native American tribes of the region. Six ex-officio, non-voting seats represent the sanctuary's federal partners (Olympic National Park, NOAA Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Navy) and the Northwest Straits Commission. The council meets bimonthly, except during the summer. The council has three standing committees – the executive committee, resource protection committee, and education/outreach committee - to assist the work of the council. In addition, the advisory council has established working groups on an as-needed basis.

2007 Annual Report

In 2007, the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Council met in five different locations around the sanctuary. At each meeting, a member report outlining the interests and issues of a particular constituency or agency was provided, with reports from the Olympic National Park, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, research (University of Washington), citizen-at-large, and Washington Department of Ecology representatives.

Council chair Dr. Terrie Klinger represented the council at a signing ceremony for a historic agreement among representatives from the Makah, Quileute, Hoh tribes and Quinault Nation, the State of Washington and NOAA creating the Intergovernmental Policy Council, which provides the tribes and Washington state opportunities to advise the sanctuary on a government-to-government basis and to develop common marine conservation strategies. The tribes also will continue to participate as members of the advisory council.

The council reviewed a demonstration wave energy project proposed for Makah Bay within the boundaries of the sanctuary and commented on an environmental assessment prepared by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) as part of the license application. A working group recommended a number of conditions be included in the project to protect sanctuary resources and to increase our understanding of the potential impacts of this new and novel technology. The advisory council adopted the recommendations in a letter to the superintendent that was forwarded to FERC as part of its public comment process.

In September, the U.S. Navy gave a briefing on the Northwest Training Range Complex proposal and what issues may be considered in a draft environmental impact statement. Parts of the Northwest Training Range Complex include waters of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. After the briefing, the council adopted a resolution requesting that the Navy broaden the range of alternatives within the geographic area of the sanctuary and consider maintaining the current level of activities instead of increasing them. In addition, the council authorized the creation of a working group to assist the sanctuary in developing a strategy for the management plan review public scoping meetings.

The council received a wide variety of informational briefings on critical issues and initiatives involving the sanctuary. These included reports on a new automated tracking program for oceangoing vessels transiting to and from Puget Sound, and cruise ship compliance with an agreement outlining best management practices while operating in state and sanctuary waters. The council also heard a report by two council members who participated in a global climate change workshop in Washington, D.C., as well as an update on the results of deep-sea coral research conducted by sanctuary staff. The council was briefed on the procedures and council role in the upcoming Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary management plan review. The director of Washington Sea Grant provided information on a coast-wide initiative to develop research priorities and information needs. Educational staff from the sanctuary and Seattle Aquarium talked about the Ocean Literacy Project which will provide new curriculum, teacher trainings and teaching tools for fourth-and fifth-grade teachers in the Puget Sound and outer coast school districts.

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 1992. The council has 21 members covering the wide spectrum of interests in the region, with 15 voting seats representing various facets of the community including conservation, education, research, fishing, whale watching, recreation, business /industry, and the community-at-large. The remaining ex-officio seats represent the sanctuary's state and federal partners. The council generally meets four times a year.

2007 Annual Report

The council has been involved in the sanctuary's management plan review process since 2003. The draft management plan was submitted to Office of National Marine Sanctuaries headquarters in 2007 and is expected to be released for public review in spring 2008.

The zoning working group was initiated in 2005 due to a consensus agreement by the ecosystem-based management working group to tackle one of the most significant and difficult issues in sanctuary management: applying ecosystem-based management and zoning at a site. As a first step, the group developed a definition of ecological integrity. In 2006, the working group created a science subgroup to work on metrics to be used with zoning concepts. A proposed agenda was outlined for 2008 to include: 1) convening the integrity subgroup to chose metrics to be assessed and propose methodologies for assessment; 2) conducting long-term trend analysis of each metric and producing a report assessing the status of ecological integrity in the sanctuary; and 3) convening the zoning working group to consider the report and make recommendations to the council on whether or not to move forward with zone planning.

With the council's support the sanctuary's condition report was commissioned in October 2004 to serve as a prototype for the entire sanctuary system. The condition report, intended to be released every five years, will set the stage for the sanctuary's management plan release. It is to be considered an executive summary on the state of the sanctuary, rather than a scientific document. More detailed analyses on each issue and strategies to protect resources will be in the management plan. The general assessment is that the sanctuary is in a guarded condition, in need of immediate care. Several of the pressures that are impacting sanctuary resources are vessel noise levels, whale strikes and entanglements, fishing and dredging activities, and damage to maritime heritage sites.

Years of effort paid off this year for the sanctuary, the advisory council, NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard when, for the first time in the United States, ship traffic lanes were shifted to reduce the risk of collisions between large ships and whales. The action was approved by the United Nations International Maritime Organization in December 2006 and was initiated on July 1, 2007. Since then, ships transiting the shipping lanes through the sanctuary have traveled a slightly different path, one designed to separate whales and ships. This lane shift was calculated to reduce risks of ship-whale collisions by up to 81percent for all large whales in the area, and by up to 58 percent for northern right whales. Monitoring by the sanctuary and the University of New Hampshire's Center for Coastal Ocean Mapping indicates that

vessels are complying with the lane shift and using the new lanes. The importance of the shift was emphasized when the carcass of an apparently ship struck humpback whale was found near the shipping lanes at the end of June, only a week prior to the lanes being shifted.

NOAA and the Dominican Republic Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources signed a formal agreement establishing the sister sanctuary between Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the Dominican Republic's Marine Mammal Sanctuary. This initiative hallmarks a new chapter in the conservation of humpback whales in the North Atlantic, protecting humpback whales on both ends of their range. The sister sanctuary initiative is of international significance as both the U.S. and the Dominican Republic are Parties to UNEP's Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Protocol, and the SPA's Marine Mammal Action Plan highlights sister sanctuaries as priority actions. The council has supported this effort.

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Profile

The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 1997. The council has 15 members and 15 alternates; five seats represent local community governments, and the other ten represent facets of the sanctuary community, including education, research, fishing, diving, tourism, cultural resources, economic development, and the community-at-large. The council meets bi-monthly, with informal coffees and lunches scheduled for non-meeting months. Working groups meet as needed.

2007 Annual Report

In 2007, the council's main focus was the sanctuary's management plan review, which began in 2006. To help with this process, the council formed six working groups: sanctuary operations, funding, resource protection, boundary expansion, education and outreach, and monitoring. The working groups met approximately 20 times throughout 2007 to continue to work on the various issues.

In 2007, the funding working group recommended to the council that the Thunder Bay Sanctuary form a relationship with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to start a local chapter. The council voted and a motion was passed to accept this recommendation. Since the recommendation was made, sanctuary and foundation staff have begun the process of hiring a person to fill the local position of fundraiser and development director. The staff member should be in place in early 2008.

Also in 2007, the council passed a resolution to recommend expansion of the sanctuary's boundary to an approximately 3,662-square-mile area encompassing the waters off Alcona, Alpena and Presque Isle counties. The primary rationale for the recommendation is preservation and protection of maritime heritage resources. The expanded sanctuary boundary is based on density of known and undiscovered resources; the historical, archaeological and recreational significance of individual and collective resources; the maritime landscape; and the practicality of managing resources in a three-county area.

The council took major volunteer roles and participated in events such as Thunder Bay Maritime Festival, Thunder Bay Community Boat Building Program, Riverfest, and the Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival. Council members also provided volunteer hours for education and outreach programs held at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center. Several council members were trained to conduct guided tours of the sanctuary's exhibits and give presentations to visiting groups.

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